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SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF THE LATE

MR. JOSEPH COWLEY,

SUPERINTENDENT OF RED HILL SUNDAY SCHOOL, AND SENIOR
SECRETARY OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION, SHEFFIELD.

BY JOHN HOLLAND,

AUTHOR OF THE LIFE OF SUMMERFIELD.

I am Joseph your brother.—*Genesis* xlv, 4.

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TO
SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS
OF
EVERY DENOMINATION,
ESPECIALLY
THOSE ASSOCIATED IN SUNDAY SCHOOL UNIONS

THIS MEMOIR
OF A MAN WHO LABOURED LONG, FAITHFULLY,
AND USEFULLY,
IN THE BLESSED WORK OF TEACHING THE RISING
GENERATION THE KNOWLEDGE, FEAR,
AND LOVE OF GOD THEIR SAVIOUR,
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY

JOHN HOLLAND.

P R E F A C E.

THE following pages are a reprint of one of the publications of the Sunday School Union in London. They comprise the memoirs of a man who was for many years a zealous and devoted labourer in the cause of Sunday schools, and may be read with interest and profit by all who are engaged in the same benevolent enterprise.

Although the work is more particularly adapted to interest the teachers and conductors of Sunday schools, yet it contains enough of incident to engage the attention even of the youngest scholars; while the spirit of benevolence and piety which pervades its pages will commend it to the heart of every individual who may favour it with a perusal.

In the original edition the memoirs consisted of one unbroken narrative, without either table of contents or index: in preparing the present edition for the press, it has been divided into chapters, to each of which is prefixed a short summary of contents. This, it is believed, will be a help to the reader, and consequently an improvement to the work.

G. COLES.

THE LIFE
OF
MR. JOSEPH COWLEY.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory remarks—Mr. Cowley's birth and early life—His tenderness of conscience—Apprenticed to a cutler in Sheffield—Gives way to evil habits—Removes from Sheffield to Manchester—Determines to go to sea—The prodigal among the swine—Arrives at Liverpool, and enters a man-of-war—The fleet sails for the Mediterranean—Narrow escape from death—Reflections on the works of God—An engagement.

INTRODUCTORY to the ensuing brief notices of a most excellent man, and one who was exceedingly dear to the writer as a Christian friend, it may be appropriate here to remark, that, from a very early period of his manhood, and ever after his conversion to God, the deceased kept a journal. From a number of early, loose, and irregular entries, he commenced, in the year 1817, a consecutive detail of the general transactions of his life; and this narrative he continued

to the middle of the last year of his earthly course. A document so voluminous, for it nearly fills two thick folio paper books, must, of course, contain much that can be in no way interesting beyond the circle of his family and friends: but, at the same time, it is mostly interwoven with passages of a more striking nature, while the entire texture of the narrative is so intimately identified with the recognised dealings of divine Providence, and the wonders of redeeming grace, that it appears due to the glory of that Holy Spirit, to whom the deceased ascribed all his works of faith and labours of love, to extend the memorial of his worth beyond the privacy of a manuscript record, or the narrow range of personal acquaintance.

The auto-biographical sketch, above alluded to, is thus introduced:—"For many years I have had a strong desire, and it has been much impressed upon my mind, to commit to writing the prominent circumstances of my life: my relatives have often expressed a wish that I would do so, and my own family have at various times added their entreaties. But yet, how I shall faithfully delineate the different transactions and occurrences, so as to state the whole truth without disguise,

and at the same time so mention the improprieties as not to give the least countenance to youthful vanities, I feel at a loss. I have no idea that what I write will ever be made public, nor do I wish that it should. Of my ancestors, I know but little beyond what I gather from the grave-stones in the church-yard, where I can trace the names up to my great-grandfather; but this I know, and have found from many years' experience, that I am one of the degenerate sons of Adam; that in me naturally dwelleth no good thing, and that if there be any change of conduct, or difference of character, it is of grace,—for, by the grace of God, I am what I am: it is because his compassion fails not, and his mercy endures for ever, that I am not consumed." He then, in allusion to the memoir, concludes the paragraph with this apostrophe:—"Assist me, O thou Holy Spirit, who from my earliest days didst strive with me; through whose blessed influence I was often preserved—often convinced of what was wrong; so strong was thy influence, that, when in childhood I sinned, and from my youth up, even until now, when I have sinned, it has been against the clearest light and knowledge, the strongest remon-

strances of conscience, and often in the greatest agonies of mind!"

JOSEPH COWLEY was born at Edensor, a small village near Chatsworth, in Derbyshire, on the 8th of July, 1768. His father was upholsterer in the domestic establishment of the duke of Devonshire, whose princely mansion was within a few hundred yards of the residence of the Cowleys. The father, just alluded to, was an ingenious sculptor, and the brace of bucks, over the stables at Chatsworth, are understood to have been carved by him: be this as it may, his connection with the duke's household afforded the subject of this memoir many opportunities of expatiating through the splendid apartments of the "Palace of the Peak;" and thus, even in childhood, his mind became familiarized with scenes and arrangements very different from those which otherwise must have surrounded him as the native of a secluded Derbyshire village.

The mother of our Joseph was a prudent woman, a notable housewife, and a steady attendant upon the ordinances of the Church of England. Her son observes,—“At a very early period of my life I was convinced that I was a sinner, and the Spirit of God often

strove with me ; but, like Samuel of old, I did not know his voice. As my father was what was called a *wise man*, a *philosopher*, the principal charge of the family devolved upon our mother, and it was well for us that this was the case. She taught us, as soon as we could understand any thing, that there was a God everywhere present, that saw us in the darkest night, in the most secret place ; that he knew the thoughts of our hearts, and that if our faults were never discovered in the present world, we must give an account in the day of judgment.”

When about ten years of age, he was guilty of a juvenile fault against a neighbour, which afterward acknowledging, he was readily forgiven,—“ But,” says he, “ I could not forgive myself ; so keen was the conviction, [that he had done wrong,] that for weeks I used to go under the hedges to pray ; and I have often thought if there had been a Sunday school at Edensor, and I had been a scholar, I should have experienced the pardon of my sins, even at that age. About this time, my grandmother and a beloved sister died. The grief of my mother, on these occasions, was affecting to us all. I now determined that I would give up

my foolish companions and practices, and seek the Lord. For some time, I kept my resolutions, read my Bible, said my prayers every evening, and never omitted going to church: but these convictions wore away, and I followed again my youthful vanities."

In October, 1782, he was apprenticed to a table-knife cutler, in Sheffield Park. Being a good-natured, good-tempered, and naturally smart and cheerful boy, he easily yielded to the solicitations of companions of his own age; and thus, during his apprenticeship, he contracted "many foolish habits." Conscience, however, still did its duty; and, during this period, he often felt painful misgivings on account of his conduct, dreading lest the judgment of God should fall upon him.

On the expiration of his indentures, and after spending six months in Nottinghamshire, he went to reside with a family professing religion; but the conduct of the various members of that family at home was so opposed to their profession, that it gave him a dislike to what might, but for their inconsistency, have settled him, even at that time, in the ways of piety. We have it, indeed, on his own authority, that what was

done to him by this deceitful family—the head of which was even an occasional preacher!—was a principal cause of his leaving Sheffield, and of his subsequent wanderings from his country and his God. How awful is the reflection that such sin should be laid at the door of a family professing godliness, and actually members of the visible church of Christ! What a dreadful evil is hypocrisy!

On leaving Sheffield, he went to Manchester, where he obtained a situation in a machine manufactory. Here he met with a man, who had been in the naval service, who deluded him into the belief, that by going to sea they might make their fortunes. They accordingly set out one Saturday night for Liverpool; the rain fell very fast, so that when, at midnight, they got to Warrington, they had not a dry thread about them, and being unknown, and their appearance not very prepossessing to strangers, nobody would take them in. Thus drenched and houseless, they first repaired for shelter to the church porch; here, however, they did not stay long; the idea of ghosts and hobgoblins harassed their imaginations, and conscience, like a gnawing worm, gave them

no rest. They next descried a spacious pigstye, in which several swine were lying; Joseph presently crept in among them, and then called to his companion, "Come, George, here is the prodigal son among swine!" Here they lay till morning, their bristly companions behaving very well, and themselves deriving from the heat of the animals as much warmth and comfort as was possible in such a situation.

On the 13th January, 1793, our adventurers reached Liverpool, and, on the following day, they repaired to the sign of the ship, on the New Quay, a rendezvous for seamen; and here, at the pressing entreaty of his wicked companion, Joseph Cowley enlisted as a volunteer into his majesty's service. Being an expert dancer, and moreover able to play pretty well on the violin, the ten or twelve days between his enlistment and the moment of his being drafted to a ship passed pleasantly enough at the public house where he abode. On reaching the ship, however, such was the horrid swearing, confusion, and iniquitous daring of every description, that his heart for very terror and disgust quailed within him; his sins stared him in the face, and he trembled lest, for the desperate im-

pieties of the crew, the Almighty, in his just judgment, should sink the vessel. For some time he was as miserable as a man well could be, who feared every moment lest he should drop into hell; his appetite forsook him, and for some time he pined into feebleness through excessive grief. During this season of distress, he often found relief in weeping, though his tears were not tears of penitence,—for as yet he knew not the way of faith through a crucified Redeemer.

Time, however, and familiarity with the circumstances of his nautical life, wore away the edge of his convictions, his fears, his occasional good wishes and good resolutions; though storms, rocks, enemies' ships, cannon firing, and other of the perils incident to the movement of a ship of war, never failed to recall to the pangs of his remorse their original sharpness.

On the 27th of March, the vessel in which he served anchored in Milford Haven. "In the morning," says he, "I was agreeably surprised to find we were at anchor in a haven indeed; it was a fine morning, and the sun brightly shone. Here also lay at anchor a French ship lately captured, and having English colours flying over her own.

I had never seen any thing like this before ; and now I first heard them talk of prize money, of hatbands* of dollars and doubloons ; and here the phantom goddess, *Fortune*, again erected her standard in my heart. Our captain gave leave for the country people to come on board, with all kinds of trinkets and confectionary. Two fiddlers likewise came, and full liberty was given for the indulgence of mirth and festivity. I now banished all my fears, and gave full scope to my ambition of making a fortune. Sometimes I played the violin, sometimes I danced, sometimes I sung."

This, as the reader will perceive, was the period just after the French revolution had not only threatened the soil of almost every nation in Europe with devastation and blood, but had covered the ocean with hostile flags. During the ensuing twelve months, the subject of this memoir was on board the *Bedford*, cruising in the Mediterranean. The narrative of what took place under his own inspection during the time so spent, as it oc-

* It was the practice of the sailors to pierce the dollars, draw a string through them, and tie them about their hats, as indicative of their success in the acquisition of *prize money*.

curs at great length in his journal, furnishes a melancholy comment,—if comment indeed were necessary to set forth the horrors of that war,—on that inveteracy of destructiveness which seemed to actuate the fleets of England and France. Such details, however, would, on the whole, be here quite out of place—a few extracts may suffice:—“On the 18th of June it blew a very hard gale, with a very heavy sea: about eight o’clock in the evening, going to the head of the ship, a tremendous wave dashed over her: for some time I was completely immersed in the briny effusion: it was a wonder to all present that I was not washed overboard. How astonishingly did I see the hand of divine Providence preserving me, not only from a watery grave, but from falling into hell!” Ten days afterward, he says, “About 11 A. M. my fears were alarmed with the cry of ‘All hands, hoy!’ I know not how it is, among the whole ship’s crew, not one seems like myself; all the rest seem to expect something gratifying, while I am almost dead with fear: surely I am more guilty than any man. One of the carpenter’s crew is brought up to the gangway, convicted of stealing onions, and flogged. As soon as this is over,

the bell rings, and the boatswain's mate pipes to dinner: but I am put into such a tremour that I can eat nothing. A hostile fleet is like birds of prey: we have no particular destination, but strive to keep as close to the wind as we can, in order, if possible, to have the weather gauge of an enemy: thus we soar about, seeking whom we may devour." A few days afterward, he had but just dropped asleep, "when the drum beat *to arms*, [in the expectation that the French fleet were just upon them.] All things were cleared away for action, and every man repaired to his gun, Every one appeared cheerful but myself; and the general expressions around me were, 'Death or victory!' but so dreadful were my convictions for sin—eternal misery was what I dreaded—that I could cheerfully have submitted to die, had not the consequences of an hereafter preyed upon my spirit like a gnawing worm." The following characteristic sketch of a scene, which has most likely never been witnessed by the reader of this little volume, will be acceptable; it occurred on the discovery of a large fleet off Marseilles:—"The boatswain having piped 'All hands, hoy!' all the officers, in full uniform, were arranged along the larboard gang-

way. The captain, splendidly dressed, stood at the break of the quarter deck. Having waved his hand and obtained silence, he addressed the officers and ship's crew as countrymen and Britons, stating, that we were now upon the enemy's coast, and might soon expect to fall in with the enemy's fleet; that the eyes of our sovereign, of the members of both houses of parliament, nay, the eyes of our countrymen, and the whole world, were upon us: that upon our fidelity and bravery depended our country's welfare, and the peace of the whole world! From what British valour had done, might be inferred what British valour could do, and what British valour would do! Here was stamping, and cheering, and huzzaing! It was astonishing to what a pitch of enthusiasm our minds were wrought; even my poor desponding spirit was elated with a degree of delight to be engaged in my country's cause,—and that country Britain: to a man, all seemed to say they would conquer or die."

It may be proper to transcribe the following notice of a narrow escape from death which he experienced about this time, and to which he often alluded with gratitude to God, in after life:—"Off Toulon, August 9, 1793.

At two in the morning the boatswain's mate called the watch to hoist water. Being asleep under the quarter deck, starting up, and running forward, I fell down the after-hatchway, head foremost: having on a large pair of plated buckles, that upon my right shoe caught the side of a hammock, and I hung a little while suspended; I believe, had not this been the case, my neck would have been broken, I fell with such violence. Here I saw the hand of Providence stretched out to preserve me from sudden death in a very wonderful manner; the impression made upon my mind, I never afterward lost sight of; and think I never can forget the deliverance to the latest hour of my life."

The fleet now parted company; the Bedford, in which the subject of this memoir sailed, standing for Genoa to take in water and provisions. In sight of those shores which excited so many beautiful classical recollections in the poetical mind of Falconer, and upon the scenery of which few persons it is presumed could gaze without emotion, he makes the following reflections:—"Often in this sea, (the Mediterranean,) have I stood upon the deck of the Bedford, the sun shining

in his strength amidst a cloudless sky, and have viewed with surprise and astonishment the wonderful Alps of Italy, their peaks in countless numbers standing one behind another (I dare attempt no other comparison or description) like so many church spires! This, I believe, is the simplest and truest description I can give. The Spanish Pyrenees, as we passed along the coast, exceeded all I had seen before; but the *Alps of Italy* are beyond compare! Had I not been a conscious sinner, groaning under a load of guilt, or rather, had I been a sinner saved by grace,—had I experienced a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness,—had I been born again of the Spirit, and had Jesus been formed in my heart the hope of glory,—I should have been delightfully employed, day by day, in contemplating Jehovah's mighty works; for even *here* a leisure hour is to be found. The Alps, described faintly above; the boisterous winds, rending our strongest sails; the swelling waves; the huge sea-monsters, spouting water; the hundreds of flying-fish; the wonderful water-spout, like a black serpentine cylinder descending, and causing the briny deep, ere it reaches its glassy bosom, to leap up to meet

it mountain-high ! In the night, 'the moon takes up the wondrous tale,'

And shines among the other orbs of light,
Reflecting bright upon the briny flood ;
While other planets shine with steadier light ;
And twinkling stars of first and second magnitude,
Well known to me in Britain's favour'd isle.
I stand and gaze, reflect, and think upon
My happy hours spent in night wanderings
While gazing on the starry skies. Britain,
Dear favour'd isle, O, how I love thy name !
My country ! O, how I do love my country !
I hardly know, e'en in this situation,
What I would not do, or could not suffer
In my country's cause."

His bravery, if not his patriotism, was soon put to the proof, in the dreadful engagement before Toulon, in October, 1793. It is unnecessary to go further into detail upon the scenes of horror presented during and after the action ; suffice it to say, that he was one of the foremost to jump upon the poop of a French ship with a boarding pike in his hand, to haul down the Gallic ensign, and bend and hoist British colours in its place.

CHAPTER II.

The ship anchors at Corsica—Reflections—A violent fever breaks out among the crew—Mr. Cowley is seized with it—Is deeply convinced of sin—Interesting account of his conversion—Reflections thereon—Recovers his health—Has another narrow escape—Receives a letter from his sister—The ship returns to England—His sister, by great exertions, procures his discharge—Joyful meeting at his mother's house—His mother's character and death.

IN March, 1794, the Bedford anchored off Corsica, and Mr. Cowley went ashore upon the island to take in water. "I was much struck," says he, "with the appearance of the natives: I could not help thinking of Robinson Crusoe. Hairy caps, and skins, with the hair outside, for gaiters; and great coats without sleeves, the hairy side outward; each carried a gun, and really they had the appearance of barbarians. So dreadfully did the sickness rage here, that we had not as many men in health as could hoist in a boat. We had to dig wells in the sand, and the water which we got was brackish. I was much surprised to see the country covered with human bones; one would have thought the natives were cannibals: we propped our casks with skulls while we filled

them with water!" The conclusion of the passage is striking and affecting:—"While thus employed, having strayed from the rest one morning, I was entranced, as it were, in a reverie of silent musing. I saw the sparrow, the yoldring, (yellow hammer,) the spink, (chaffinch,) the linnet, the lark, and heard every one of them warble the same notes as in England. I saw the raven, the pigeon, and heard them make the same noise; the duck, the hen, the cock, all spake the same language as in England. I heard the ass bray, the horse neigh; the cow lowed, the sheep bleated, and even the frogs croaked, exactly the same as in England—man only seemed a barbarian to man! I could not understand the natives. When they came to buy or sell, they made such noises and gestures, that I wondered much. '*Bona, Bona,*' was the cry when they had any thing to sell. '*Quanta, Quanta, una sou! dena sou! troa sou! quatre sou!*' &c., with counting of fingers, and shrugging up of shoulders, such as I never saw. I believe for more than an hour I was lost in these silent reflections. Although a very unhappy man in spirit, yet I appeared cheerful and was obliging to all."

It will now be proper, as assuredly it will be pleasant, to turn from these extracts to the contemplation of an event the most important in the life of this excellent man, which had so benign an effect upon the whole of his subsequent conduct, and which was in itself as remarkable as it was consequential. What is here alluded to is his *conversion*,—an event which took place in his soul, of so singular a character, that had its effect been less immediate, less durable, or perhaps even connected with more explicit human agency—or had the subject of it been less worthy of entire belief, or Scripture and collateral testimony less authoritative as to the possibility of the case—its real occurrence might probably, by many, have been questioned altogether. As it is, we have not only the credibility of the testimony of the whole after life of one of the most single-minded and simple-hearted of men, but of one who lived to reflect, to judge, and to decide deliberately upon the circumstances connected with an event, which, as it issued in an entire change of heart and conduct, he had Scriptural grounds for not allowing any one to persuade him might have been merely an effect of the imagination.

In May, 1794, the Bedford, Captain Gould, was lying at anchor off the island of Corsica, her crew, and the crews of the other ships infected with a violent fever, of which many were dying, and many more being sent to a hospital on shore. Mr. Cowley, after long beating up against the disorder, at length yielded to its influence, and, through one of its peculiar effects, wasted almost to a skeleton. Among the rest of the sick he was now carried to Bastia, (recently surrendered to Lord Hood,) and placed in St. Francis's, or as it was more emphatically designated from its melancholy emblem, *Black-Flag Hospital*. Here his disorder reached its crisis; he was sometimes delirious; all expected him to die; and even the doctors gave him up: but the nurses, who were soldiers' wives, did not cease their tenderest assiduities for his comfort. We must now continue the narrative in his own words:—"My poor mind was worse to me than my complaint; I now, indeed, found the truth of that saying, 'Men may live fools, but fools they cannot die;' but believing that my dissolution was drawing near, I resolved in my own mind, that if I perished, it should be while crying out for mercy. While in this state,

the following passage of Scripture was applied to my heart with such power, that it almost seemed as if a voice uttered it aloud—*‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’* I acknowledge with shame, that though from a child I had known the Holy Scriptures, having been trained up in the belief and perusal of them, by my dear mother, (the recollection of whom, at this time, was hardly ever out of my mind,) and although I had been trained to attend the Church of England, yet the way of faith I did not know, neither did I know the way of confession of sins.

“Without delay, however, I began the following simple plan:—I strove to recollect every thing, from the earliest period of my life, which I had done or said, and which, at the time, had made me unhappy. I remembered that, when between four and five years of age, I was convinced I was a sinner, and could neither eat, drink, nor sleep for many days on account of it; on that occasion medical assistance was tried, but nothing would do, until the conviction itself wore away. I next began to look for some of what I considered my *good deeds*; but these, instead

of balancing against my *bad actions*, as they used to do, when I was in health and strength, now only increased my unhappiness. The motives from which I had done them were evidently wrong; and I now saw these among my worst crimes: I was nearly in despair.

“The ward in which I was lying, being the largest in the hospital, there were upward of *forty* sick and wounded seamen and soldiers about me. Such, however, was my distress, that I began to talk about the salvation of my soul, and the pardon of my sins; often expressing the dread I felt of hell. Immediately the doctor, the nurses, and my poor fellow-sufferers declared with one voice, I was ‘*off in my head!*’ though I felt well assured I had but just come to my right senses. Some pitied me; others said many hard words. The doctor, a Frenchman, of the name of Buffon, was very kind, came often to see me, strove to comfort me, and even told me I must look to God: he often wiped the cold sweat from my face. I shall never forget him! I now began, at times, to cry out very loud, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner!’ This caused many odd expressions to be uttered by those around me: all these

I distinctly heard, but nothing could divert me from the matter in hand. My cries for mercy were soon expressed with greater frequency. For some days and nights, I believe, I never closed my eyes, and took no sustenance but a little water. I now began to give up all for lost.

“Just over my head, there was a large hole in the roof, caused by the falling of a shell fired from our camp during the siege: toward the close of one day, (about the 3d of June,) being completely spent, and lying, to appearance, nearly dead, concluding I would resign myself to death, and submit to sink to that place for which I had fitted myself by my wicked conduct; in that restless moment, lifting my eyes toward the aperture in the roof, I thought *I saw the glorified presence of the Lord Jesus Christ!* Such a sweet countenance! and as bright as the unclouded sun at noon! His arms were stretched wide open: I saw the print of the nails in each hand, and the hole made by the spear in his side! Suddenly, my burden of guilt was removed, an indescribable sweetness filled my breast. I was afterward told, that at the same time my countenance was seen to beam with a smile of joy. I uttered,

so as to be distinctly heard, ‘*O Lord, I will praise thee! O Lord, I will praise thee!*’ and then for some time lay as if I were dead. The doctor and the nurses stood at my bedside: I awoke, as out of sleep, and immediately lifted up my eyes to the opening, expecting still to see my Lord, but he was gone. Still, however, such heavenly sweetness filled my mind, as I had never enjoyed before. I began to sing hymns of mercy and goodness: and now the same inference was drawn from this rejoicing, by those about me, as when I was crying out for mercy: I could hear many of them saying I was deranged.

“I believe my disorder was completely cured; as from that moment I began rapidly to recover, and, in a few days, was so much better, as to admit of being removed into a recovery ward. I improved very fast, and the nurses were unremitting in their kindness; and often did they come to my bedside to hear me sing: during my weak state, my days and nights were nearly spent in prayer and praise.”

Readers of sacred biography will doubtless recognise, in the foregoing singular narration, a striking resemblance to a passage

in the life of the celebrated Colonel Gardiner; and Doctor Doddridge alludes to a similar manifestation vouchsafed to an eminent divine of the Church of England, living when he wrote—Rev. W. Grimshaw.

Whatever may be thought of the nature or mode of the change which was certainly effected in the good man's mind at the time referred to, the fact of an entire conversion of character thenceforward was so striking and notorious to the crew of the ship, to which he presently returned, that the epithet of "Methodist" was at once attached to him, and as an almost necessary accompaniment, every artifice was resorted to by his ungodly shipmates to induce him to dishonour his profession.

To have expected that the sweet peace, and delicate consciousness of the divine favour, should suffer no interruption amid the perpetually polluting communications on board a ship of war—where the warm-hearted convert could never hear a sermon, never exchange a word with a religious person, hardly find a place or a moment for vocal prayer, nor, it is believed, peruse a page of the word of God, except what happened to have been early imprinted on his memory in

connection with the services of the Church of England—to have expected growth in grace, under such circumstances, would indeed have been to expect something akin to a miracle.

Nevertheless, with the exception of some occasional lapses, in which the strength or the suddenness of the temptation overcame the watchfulness or the faith of the young believer, he does appear, on the whole, to have maintained such a consistency of character, as proved even to his irreligious shipmates, and especially the officers by whom he was noticed, the deepness and permanency of that divine change of which he avowed himself the subject.

The fever continued to rage, and multitudes to die in the hospital. Mr. Cowley was soon called upon to act both as the chaplain and attorney of those about him. Being a good writer, he was for some time daily employed in making seamen's wills, which, as they had to be signed by the doctor, brought him into more frequent contact with that gentleman. On one occasion, when he had a party of officers at his country-house, near Bastia, he called Mr. Cowley into the room, and laying his hand upon his

head, said to his friends, "This good man certainly died, (stating the circumstances of the case,) adding, I shall now scarcely think a man is dead until he is buried."

He was much shocked, when he began to walk out of the hospital, at the manner in which the dead were disposed of. "An elderly man and woman," says he, "were engaged to dig the graves; and one grave held all that died in a day—sometimes four or five—more or less. They dug the graves in the morning. The dead bodies were sewed up in hammocks or blankets, and then being placed upon a hand-barrow, were carried to the grave-side, and tumbled in, so that as the corpse fell in, it lay, whether the face were upward or downward! I have gone to my ward so shocked at these sights, that I have been extremely ill with excessive fretting. Amid my hours of prayer and meditation, I felt an ardent desire that the Lord would lengthen my life that I might not die there."

In consequence of the grief which he felt at seeing the bodies of his countrymen thus indecently disposed of, along with some shocking depredations committed by the rats in the dead-house, he succeeded, conjointly with others, in obtaining coffins, light shells,

made of slim, unplanned boards, after the fashion of orange chests. He sometimes read the burial service over his companions. On the interment of a young Swede of the name of Wilson, with whom he had been intimate, he was desired to read the service. He was standing at the grave-side, feeble with the effects of a recent ague, and trembling with the excitement of the occasion, reading the usual passages from the prayer book, when the earth suddenly gave way, and he was precipitated into the grave, demolishing the flimsy coffin, and of course exposing the corpse! This mischance so frightened him, that he was taken out of the hole apparently dead, and carried to the hospital, where he lay some time very ill, thinking the accident ominous of his own dissolution.

The writer of this brief tribute to the memory of a beloved friend, cannot forbear transcribing the following passage: it shows how naturally the recollection of an old English custom, which had been planted in his childish feelings in his native village of Edensor, sprang up and bore blossoms of pleasure on the distant and desolate island of Corsica:—"Christmas, 1794. I made preparations for this festival, by obtaining a

cheese, a loaf, and a bottle of ale, being desirous to have a faint resemblance of Christmas eve, as it used to be kept at my mother's house. Having previously invited the nurses, I had a good fire with a *yule-clog*, my cheese and loaf, pricked with holly full of berries, and an ale posset in a large brown earthen pot. We sung 'Christian's awake,' and other hymns." A similar recognition of the happy hours he had spent at his mother's Christmas's, took place every subsequent year around his own happy social fire, and among the members of his own family, and occasional friends, as long as he lived.

In July, 1795, during an engagement with the French fleet in the Mediterranean, Mr. Cowley experienced another very narrow escape from death. On the evening of the 12th he dreamed, that while engaged with the enemy, he received a dreadful wound in his head; on his mentioning it the following morning to one of his mess, the tar immediately, with an oath, interpreted it to mean that he would not be wounded at all. The line of battle having been formed the next day, the firing commenced, and Mr. Cowley, being one of the powder-men, went to the magazine for some cartridges, which

were delivered out, two at once in a covered box, to prevent accidents by fire. Just while in the act of stooping down to take the cartridge-box, a large block connected with the fore-tackle fell from the booms upon his head, and drove him with great violence down into the magazine. The back of his head was laid open with the stroke, his nose was split by the fall, his right cheek torn down "like the lapel of a coat," and his right hand crushed almost to pieces. He was taken up senseless, and to appearance lifeless: one or two, however, who were his friends, happening to be near, they, instead of throwing him overboard for dead, as they might have done many a poor fellow in like circumstances, instantly carried him down into the cockpit, where the doctor, being his friend too, dressed his wounds, laid him on the platform, and in an hour or two brought him to himself again. As soon as he was able to observe the situation of those around him, he remarks, "Painful as my wounds felt, I saw it was possible to be in still worse circumstances; and a pleasing sensation of gratitude pervaded my mind."

About this time he received a letter from one of his sisters, who was the wife of a re-

spectable foreigner then residing in London, assuring him that if ever the ship came into a British port, and he would advise her of it, she would procure his discharge, if possible, even though she were compelled to beg it on her knees at his majesty's feet. This hope buoyed up his spirits amid all his trials: for nothing could be more repugnant, even to his natural disposition, than the life he now led, and much more so to his renewed state, with a mind tenderly alive to the motions of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, as he felt that God could screen his naked head even in the day of battle—though he did not know whether he would or not—he laboured in all things to do his duty, and was always found at his post night and day. When, therefore, the fleet received orders to return to England, he naturally participated in “the joy of the whole crew.” “Four successive days,” he writes, “we were busily employed, [in St. Florenza Bay, near Leghorn,] in wooding, watering, and otherwise preparing for our intended voyage home. Some pleasing emotions at times crossed my mind, that, if spared to arrive again in my native country, my sister might succeed in getting my discharge.”

Toward the middle of October, the Bedford, now commanded by Captain Montgomery, stood fair for England, and, on the 16th, he writes, "At day-break, to our no small joy, we descried the white cliffs of Britain. Delightful spot! My feelings cannot be described: in very deep humility of mind, in silent thought, and with real gratitude, I remembered the vows I had made unto the Lord, how I would serve him with all my heart and strength; in spite of my efforts to prevent it, tears of gratitude stole silently down my cheeks: what my heart then felt, I never shall forget." In three or four days they came to a quarantine anchor off Spithead.

His sister, before mentioned, having heard of the arrival of the vessel, repaired to Portsmouth in order to seek her brother's discharge, which was ultimately obtained, under circumstances affectingly romantic in their nature. The first interview overcame the feelings of both parties; after mutual salutation, they both wept aloud—and "Betty, is it you?" and "Joseph, is it you?" were the first expressions, upon their recognising one another after a separation of many years, and both so much altered! To use his own

words—"I was much altered, my hands and face were tanned with the last summer's scorching sun in the Mediterranean, and in a sailor's dress; but little like the pale-faced youth she last saw me: she was a good-looking lady, elegantly dressed, and not like the tall and slender Betty Cowley I had known her." Her address and appearance, indeed, were what might be expected of one who, by means of her husband's connections, was brought into frequent contact with nobility and even royalty itself.

Such was the devoted and disinterested woman, who had come to the port, determined if possible, and at all events, to obtain her brother's release. She first, by the most sedulous application, and by liberal pecuniary offers, sought his discharge in the usual manner; so powerful, however, was the stress of obligation then bearing on the naval equipment of our country's defences, and so great was the value of a seaman at that crisis, that the most polite but peremptory negatives were given to every solicitation in this manner.

Denied, but not dismayed, this persevering heroine of sisterly affection sought, and obtained access to the admiral's ship,

and there pleaded her request to the ear and the heart of Sir Peter Parker. The gallant commander was not insensible to a woman's tears, and he durst not trust his sympathies against his duty: he withdrew from the petitioner, assuring her that her brother's discharge, at that time, was impossible. With her sex's invincible determination, when so nobly influenced, she followed the admiral to his cabin, fell on her knees at his feet, and with cries and tears—and in spite of his remark, that her brother could only be released by an order from government, she pleaded his authoritative situation—"Who," said she, "dare ask Sir Peter Parker, lord high admiral of Great Britain, what he did in a matter of such small moment to the service, but of such great consequence to a widowed mother?" The old admiral was agitated, and relented, and in a very affecting tone of voice, raising the suppliant from her knees, exclaimed, "My good lady, you shall have your brother! My good lady, you shall have your brother!" and immediately he wrote a discharge. Such an instance of sisterly heroism is not often found; indeed, on the arrival of the kindred couple in London, General Jarry, a well-known French

refugee, happening to be present at the house of Mr. Cowley's sister, observed, on hearing the story, that he had known several heroic actions performed by husbands and lovers, but he had never before known a sister undergo so much for a brother.

No wonder that he regarded this sister as an angel of mercy, sent by Providence thus to deliver him! After remaining some weeks at his relatives' house in Hanover-square, London, he took his leave of her, with streaming eyes, and a presentiment, sadly realized! that they should never meet again in this world. At the beginning of 1796, Mr. Cowley once more reached his mother's house at Edensor. His own account of this return is affecting:—"When we [himself and two brothers] arrived at my mother's house, many minutes elapsed before we could persuade ourselves that the interview was real: it cannot be described. Judge ye, who know something of domestic affection, what are the feelings when the prodigal returns. I truly was the prodigal. I met with a hearty welcome from my aged mother, from brothers, and from sisters. We all thought and spoke of the parable of the prodigal son; but mark the difference,—

my much revered father was in the silent grave; I did not meet *him*—he did not fall upon my neck and kiss me. But then I had not one offended brother; they all gave me welcome. Several days passed swiftly away, partly in telling and hearing told of what had taken place since we last saw each other, and partly in music and songs of praise; the place rung with the tidings of the lost son being found, and ours was considered to be the happiest family in the village.”

It may not be improper here to remark, that Mr. Cowley's affection for his mother was always most exemplary; indeed, filial duty was a virtue which he held in such estimation, that he piously solicited and obtained his mother's approbation before entering the marriage state, though himself, at the time, between thirty and forty years of age. The venerable woman, who received the dutiful respect, and bestowed her ready blessing on such a son, was herself possessed of a superior understanding, as well as of real religion. It would be easy to furnish many traits of her character; let the following suffice:—“Before she was acquainted with the saving grace of God, and when family afflictions pressed so hard upon her

that she felt as if she could not go on another day, she used to retire into the garret, and pour out her heart and soul before God, until her dreadful anxieties vanished, and she could come down stairs as comfortable in her mind, as though the Lord had done every thing for her: this was her constant practice." Her son, on recording the above statement from her own lips, many years afterward, adds, "O, what a blessed lesson! I said to myself, 'Go thou and do likewise.' After my father's death, and when the Lord had brought her to a saving knowledge of the truth, she went every sabbath to the church in the forenoon, to [Methodist] preaching at Baslow in the afternoon, and in the evening to Béeley or Pilsley, [each place more than a mile distant from her home,] *and this was her constant practice for five or six-and-twenty years, hail, rain, blow, or snow*; and it is well known she did not give it up, until it was impossible for her any longer to go." She died in the year 1825, in the eighty-eighth year of her age. But to return to Mr. Cowley.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Cowley joins the Methodist society at Sheffield—Commences his Sunday school labours—His qualifications and success—Extract from his journal—Formation of the Sheffield Sunday School Union—Mr. Cowley elected secretary—First anniversary of the Union—Extract from a letter of Mr. Cowley's respecting it—Monthly tea meetings—Qualifications needful for Sunday school teachers—Visit to the infirmary.

ON his return to Sheffield, in 1796, although he generally attended service at the church, yet having no pious companions, he lost, in a great measure, his religious impressions, until, toward the end of the year, he was restored again to a sweet sense of the divine favour, at a class meeting among the Methodists; and, in the January following, was publicly (as was then the practice) received into that society, on the very day, as it happened, with her who afterward became his wife.

He was married on the Whitsunday following; entered into business on his own account, and, in short, exchanged the perils, the fatigues, and the temptations of a seafaring life, for the toils, the anxieties, and the misfortunes of mercantile engagements.

Such is a faint and brief outline of the history of this excellent man, from the time of his birth to his settlement in that town in which he was afterward so extensively useful. We must now delineate, with almost equal succinctness, the principal features of that character in which he will be most interesting to the readers of this memoir—that of a **SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER.**

The system of giving instruction to the children of the poor on the Lord's day, which had been developed in 1781-2, by the benevolent Robert Raikes, in the city of Gloucester, was now making considerable progress in the country, and several of these institutions were set on foot in Sheffield. Mr. Cowley was not a man to be idle under any circumstances; and now, having a heart warm with the love of Christ, and glowing to do something for the glory of a Saviour who had done so much for him, he was graciously led to devote his whole energy to the great work of instructing the children of the poor gratuitously.

In the beginning of 1799, at a meeting for religious conversation and prayer, he and another individual were powerfully influenced with the consideration of their important en-

gagement to instruct others ; they were, to use the words of the good man, “clearly convinced, and in a manner assured, that God would do great things for his church by the means of Sunday schools.” Both immediately laid themselves out in the work ; and presently so many striking, and, at the time, novel effects were produced by the reformation and the conversion of children, that, for a time, they were afraid of mentioning them abroad, lest thereby they should excite persecution, or bring reproach on the school.

In 1810, the individuals principally active in the Methodist Sunday schools in Sheffield resolved to erect a large building capable of receiving upward of a thousand children. In the contrivance and execution of this benevolent design, nothing like which had been ever before seen in the neighbourhood, Mr. Cowley was one of the most active and unwearied agents ; he not only spent day after day with the Rev. Valentine Ward and others, in soliciting contributions from known friends, and the public in general, but subscribed liberally himself, and even collected £10 from his own workmen. Of this large school, (RED HILL, opened June 11, 1811,) he was

a trustee, the first treasurer, and a superintendent for the remainder of his life.

His head, his heart, and his hand, were indeed deeply exercised in promoting the welfare of this establishment; and never was man better qualified for the discharge of the important duties of that situation, in which his zeal and his success long shone so conspicuous. He always believed that the providence of God had, in a special manner, called him to this work of caring for the lambs of Christ's fold. With such a conviction he laboured, instantly in season and out of season; and who shall say that, while doing the work of an evangelist toward this interesting section of the church, he was less really a preacher of the gospel in his manner and degree, than he would have been had he addressed with equal frequency, fervency, and effect, a congregation of adults, sabbath after sabbath?

Nor was he by any means denied those fruits which a true minister of Jesus Christ so anxiously looks for and expects, as an intimation of the favour of his divine Lord and Master. He had many "seals to *his* ministry." God gave *him* "souls for his hire." Among the latter entries in his journal, (1829,)

occurs the following:—"Mary Anne ———, about twelve years of age, of the 14th reading class, sent for me, she being ill at home. Feeble as she was, she knew me; I inquired whether she had any particular question to ask. She replied that she had not; but wished to see me, because she thought I should be glad to hear that she was going to heaven, and that she should soon be with Jesus Christ. She has no wish to get better; and her mother tells me, that death will be a welcome messenger, as she longs to be with Jesus. Here is another trophy to my Redeemer's glory—another fruit of Sunday school instruction. She told one of our superintendents, that it was in consequence of some words that I had used to her, that she was induced to seek salvation. Praise the Lord." Instances like this, and they were by no means uncommon, he justly regarded as trophies of the usefulness of the school, and tokens of the acceptableness of his own labours therein. Generally, indeed, at the various meetings of the teachers, he was wont to declare, for the encouragement of his brethren, to this effect:—"I have now been a teacher so many years—or so many—and I am not yet weary; but feel more

and more determined, grace assisting, to spend and be spent in this work of the Lord. The longer I labour for Christ, the more I love my work, and my Master, and his service, and his wages," &c.

All who knew him will corroborate the assertion, that he was, in an emphatic sense, the *apostle of little children*: his person, his matter, his manner; so simple, so earnest, so guileless; the tender father and the sincere Christian; all concurred to secure for him the attention and the affection of scholars of both sexes, especially of the girls, among whom he chiefly laboured. Upon these, his juvenile auditors, he had peculiar address in enforcing the decorums and moral obligations of life; but most generally the necessity, the doctrines, the duty, and the happiness of that salvation, which several were known to experience.

Nor did he by any means content himself with delivering from the desk that counsel and those admonitions which it was his duty, as superintendent, to address to the children; he sought, by incessant personal intercourse, to stir them up to the performance of their duties, domestic and relative, as well as religious. It was likewise his practice to in-

quire after their parents, in order that he might send, to such as seemed to require them, affectionate messages, or appropriate tracts: in this way, as also by visiting their houses, he did much good; in short, he suffered no moment of his time to be lost, being instant in season and out of season, resolved to work while it was day. Numerous instances of reformation, effected by this means, at one time or other, came to his knowledge. He once, indeed, declared, that he could not at that time find, after personal inquiry of the girls, that any of their fathers spent their evenings at the public house, but that they were more or less domestic and orderly characters. Many of these children were, indeed, from families that had become professors of religion through the instrumentality of the Sunday school. In these exercises, while his health and his strength remained, he was as untiring as many others are negligent: with him the duty of the situation in which he was placed was no formal task or ceremony; it was the very element in which his spirit delighted to expiate, and that which, indeed, God generally made the medium of blessings to the soul of his servant, even as that servant was, by

the same means, himself made a blessing to others.

An admirable, because most beneficial, practice prevails at the Red Hill school: the parents and guardians of the children are called together twice a year, and suitably addressed on their peculiar duties, especially the importance of their steady and zealous co-operation with the teachers. The speakers, on these occasions, are generally the superintendents or officers of the establishment; and here Mr. Cowley was peculiarly at home. The convictions of his judgment, and the feelings of his heart, entirely coincided herein. It may be added, that a transcript, among his papers, shows that he was the writer of a judicious paper on the best mode of conducting meetings of this kind, which appeared in the "*Teacher's Magazine*" for 1821, signed "J. C. S."

It was his custom, generally on a sabbath evening, in his own room, and after he had closed the day with prayer in his family, to enter in his journal some record of the dealings of God with his own soul, or through his instrumentality, either in the school, at public worship, or otherwise, according to circumstances. From a vast multitude of

these entries, the following, in reference to one day's engagement in the school, may be cited as a specimen of the whole:—"Sunday.—This blessed day has again returned;—we had a precious season at the opening of the school. I mentioned the death of two class leaders; both rather suddenly and unexpectedly called out of time into eternity; concerning whom, however, there did not seem to be a doubt but they were both prepared for the change. It spake loudly to all who heard, 'Be thou also ready, for,' &c., &c. At the close of the school, several strangers were present; my mind was much impressed with the thought, that the last sabbath in which I should have an opportunity of standing there, *would come*. I could not even say, that the present one might not prove the last. I felt a persuasion that all who were then present would never meet again in any congregation on earth. But there was a day and a place appointed in which we should meet—'for we must all appear at the judgment-seat of Christ!' Distant as *that* day might appear to some, the sound might be heard before midnight—'Arise, and come to judgment!' It was a long time between the promise of Christ's first coming, given to

Adam, and its fulfilment, but he *was* manifested in the flesh; and as surely as the advent of the Son of God then took place, so surely would the day of judgment come. Here I was myself much affected, and declared, ‘God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might be saved;’ and that ‘*He*, Jesus, tasted death for every man:’ that I was authorized, by the sacred volume, to offer a *present* salvation to *all* who felt themselves lost sinners, and had discovered Jesus to be a suitable and sufficient Saviour. To such I could with boldness assert—‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou *shalt* be saved’—‘for, behold, *now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation.’ O! it was a precious season: I could perceive the tear starting from many eyes, and trickling down many cheeks. I felt strong confidence that the word, spoken in much weakness, would be raised in power, and bring some glory to God. Amen! so be it!”

In 1813 originated the SHEFFIELD SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION, a sacred coalition of the various Christian sects, brought about mainly by the address of George Bennet and James Montgomery, Esqrs. Of this institu-

tion, which has been so great a blessing to the town where it exists, Mr. Cowley was elected a secretary, an office which, in his estimation, was one of the most honourable which a man could fill, because it united him with the pious members of every denomination of his townsmen. For, although he was most conscientious and decided in his attachment to the principles of that church of which he was a member and an ornament, yet was his heart ever warm to commune with, and his right hand cordially held out to salute, a Christian brother, by whatever name he might be called.

The first Whit-Monday anniversary of the Union exhibited a spectacle utterly unlike any thing which the inhabitants of Sheffield had at that time ever witnessed; the assembly of the thousands of children in the open air,—the procession along the streets,—the services in the chapels,—and the afternoon meeting of the teachers,—together constitute a sort of sacred epoch in the remembrance of those who were so happy as to be participators in the common joy of that auspicious occasion. To Mr. Cowley, then, and thenceforward, Whit-Monday became a sort of jubilee; and some notion may be formed of

his feelings from the following extract of a letter, written two days after the festival above alluded to:—

“I am at a loss for words to express the unutterable joy I felt at the meeting (of teachers) in Nether Chapel. The assembly of the venerable apostles on the day of Pentecost,—their heavenly countenances,—the cloven tongues of fire upon them,—their speaking in different languages to the astonished multitude,—the wonderful effects produced in thousands pricked to the heart,—the streaming eyes,—the uplifted hands,—the faltering voices,—‘Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?’—all this was pictured to my mind. But within the walls of Nether Chapel, methought a greater miracle appeared (for what could different languages have produced there? what but confusion? what would cloven tongues of fire have done, but engendered fear? what the cry of ‘Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?’ it would have been called uproar.) How wonderful are the ways of divine Providence! A goodly number of ministers, ambassadors of the blessed Jesus, who had long been separated by *sectarianism*, assembled together for the pur-

pose of more effectually assailing the common enemy, and driving from their own hearts the stalking horse of bigotry. Instead of listening to different languages, we see these blessed men stand up, and each hear them in our mother tongue declare 'the wonderful works of God,' the good already done, and what may be expected to result from such a union; and though we see no visible tongues of fire upon them, they speak in tongues of fire to our hearts, while the sacred flame burns within their own bosoms. The individuals composing the assembly, stand or sit amazed, silent tears bedewing many cheeks, and their reluctance to depart confirming the Scriptural assertion—'How good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!' How swift the moments flew! Never did time appear to take such rapid strides before; to me it was indeed the feast of Pentecost: I do believe the good which will result from this meeting will never be half told."

It was in connection with this Union, about twelve years ago, that the writer of these pages became more intimately acquainted with the beloved friend and associate, to whose memory and worth this biographical

tribute is gratefully and affectionately consecrated. For several years, five brethren, variously qualified, have acted together as secretaries of the above-named institution. In order to keep up a good understanding among themselves, as well as to concert and execute whatever was likely to promote *union* in the society, they agreed to take tea together once a month at the houses of each other in succession. Happier meetings of Christian friendship than those enjoyed in the society of Mr. Cowley, his survivors hardly expect again to spend on earth. Into these meetings the voice of discord, or unfriendly altercation, never entered; but, when, as would sometimes happen, one of the more versatile members introduced any topic of popular news, or domestic gossip, the affectionate voice of their senior was sure to be heard,—“My brethren, my beloved brethren, we will have nothing but *union!*” Indeed, his coadjutors in this good work, one and all, bear their united testimony to the overflowing love and indefatigable exertions of one whose like they never expect to see again.

He used to say, that the secretaries of the Union were its hands and its feet; and truly

no one more promptly took hold upon the arrangements, or went on the errands of the institution, than did this devoted man. He was ever ready to assist in the periodical visitations; and there is hardly a Sunday school within a circumference of thirty miles round Sheffield, where his voice has not been heard, and to the teachers of which he was not personally known.

At a quarterly meeting of this Union, held in July, 1819, the discussion of the question, —“What are the best means to secure a regular attendance of Sunday scholars?” terminated in a resolution to the effect, that “neither exhortations nor threatenings, neither rewards nor punishments, will ever be able to secure any thing like regularity of attendance, unless the following qualities be found *in*, and shining *upon*, teachers and superintendents, who ought especially to consider themselves as *copies* or examples for the children to imitate, viz.:

“1. An undeviating constancy and punctuality of attendance.

“2. A constant attachment of every teacher to his own class.

“3. A uniformly *serious* (but not gloomy)

and affectionate manner of speaking and teaching; and

“4. An *obvious*, earnest, and affectionate concern for the eternal interests of the children.”

This resolution was one in which the late secretary felt great interest: when printed on a large sheet, he transmitted it to several schools as “*A copy of an evangelical Sunday school teacher.*” It was indeed a beautiful portrait, the original of which might be traced in his own *conduct* and *qualifications* in its full-length proportions.

There is another qualification of great importance in the character of a true sabbath teacher, which is not recognised in the foregoing enumeration,—that of a *visiter* to the absent, sick, or dying children. In the discharge of this duty, Mr. Cowley was most exemplary. One instance of this has been given already: the following is of a still more striking character. It may not be generally known, even to those who might be most gratified by the fact, that from the commencement of the Sheffield Sunday school Mr. Montgomery has generously allowed the labour of drawing up, or at least of super-

vising, its annual reports, to be devolved upon himself. In the year 1822 he prefaced the sketch about to be given with this paragraph:—"With the following most interesting account of a visit of one of the secretaries of the Union to the Sheffield Infirmary, containing more points that distinctly exhibit the excellence and effects of Sunday schools than ever before fell under our notice in one narrative, the committee will conclude their report:—On the 16th of April, 1821, J. Cowley went to visit a Sunday school girl in the infirmary. She rejoiced to see him; there was heaven in her countenance, and her mouth spake out of the abundance of her heart, while she blessed and praised God. Two of her Sunday school companions were with her, and two more came in while Mr. Cowley stayed. The conversation was delightfully edifying to all. One of the girls began to tell of another scholar, who was dangerously ill, and said, 'O, but she is happy!' As soon as I got into the house, she cried out, 'O bless the Lord! I love him, I *do* love him, because he first loved me.' The sick girl whom they were visiting here pointed to a bed in a corner of the ward, and said, 'There lies a Sunday school teacher.'

She has been almost starved to death; she lived six weeks on two shillings. She has no friends but a poor old aunt, and I believe hunger has brought her to this!’ Mr. Cowley went to her, and asked how she did. With great meekness and simplicity she replied, ‘My afflictions are indeed heavy; I am exceeding weak in body.’ ‘I believe you are,’ said he, ‘but I hope you have consolations from another source.’ ‘O yes!’ she replied with great earnestness, ‘The Lord is abundantly kind to me: *he* has been my never-failing Friend for many years, and has assured me that he will never forsake me.’ Mr. Cowley observed, ‘That the Lord has many precious jewels in the furnace of affliction. Some of his children are tried with the loss of parents and friends, others in their health; others with deep poverty,—with one or two scanty meals a day.’ At that moment a poor woman, who was sitting on the bed-side of the patient, rose up, and cried out with many tears—‘Yes, sir, *she* is a witness of the truth of what you have said. She has gone many a day with one meal, and many a day with no meal at all; she is too good for this world.’ Mr. Cowley asked, ‘Are you her aunt?’ ‘No,’

answered the other, 'I am only a neighbour come to visit her out of real respect.' There was a general emotion throughout the ward; the nurse and patients wept aloud. Turning to the sick person, Mr. Cowley said, 'You see, my dear sister, that the Lord chastens whom he loves, not for his pleasure, but for their profit.' 'O yes,' she cried, 'Jesus doth all things well!' 'Then you have not found that the Lord is a hard Master?' 'O no; for he satisfieth my soul with his mercy. I have no wish to get better; I would rather die; but I am quite resigned. I am willing to get better if it be his will; I only desire that his will may be done.' 'Then, if you recover, you think the Lord in his providence will open a way of living for you?' 'O yes; I have no doubt, if he spares me, but all will be well; if he gives life, he will give me the means to support it.'"

The reporter adds,—“The last-mentioned sufferer (whose affliction, arising from deep poverty, that shunned exposure, was unknown at the time to her Sunday school friends) recovered her strength and health in that house of mercy, the infirmary. The next time that Mr. Cowley met her was at the sacramental table; and the Lord in whom

she believed during her extremity of distress, hoping against hope, has been faithful to his own promise and assurance of providing for her; we have the happiness to state, that she is now comfortably settled in a respectable family, at a considerable distance from Sheffield."

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Bennet's farewell meeting with the Sunday School Union—Mr. Cowley's character as a father—Letter to one of his daughters—His character as a man of business—His practice of self-examination—Extracts from his journal.

IT is not surprising that Mr. Cowley should have had the highest respect for George Bennet, Esq., not only as the founder and the patron of the Sunday School Union in Sheffield, but as an individual universally beloved in that town. A few days before that gentleman left his own home, to embark on that evangelical circumnavigation which has made his name immortal in the history of missions, he attended a half-yearly lecture which was then given to the teachers and friends. Mr. Cowley, after alluding to

the pleasure and profitableness of the sermon on that occasion, adds,—“Now came a trying scene to myself, and I believe to many hundreds besides: our worthy treasurer and father of the Union, Mr. George Bennet, appeared to take his farewell of the Sunday School Union: I was bathed in tears most of the time. In a meek, loving, humble manner, he urged the exhortation,—‘Go forward!’ O may the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ guide him through every storm of life; by sea be his strong hold, by land his deliverer; through the valley of the shadow of death, may his rod and staff comfort and support him; and may he finally land him safe on Canaan’s happy shore; there may he behold his Saviour whom he loved and honoured here, ‘without a veil between,’ and join in the everlasting chorus of ‘Worthy is the Lamb!’ Amen, amen, amen.” A few days afterward he called upon Mr. Bennet to take his leave. “We came down,” says he, “to the town together; and when we reached the bottom of Pinstone-street, we took our last farewell: [alas! it proved to be indeed the *last*.:] his words were heavenly, and heavenly sweetness beamed in his countenance. I cannot

express what I then felt: his manner! his words! his look! even the spot! I think I shall never forget. O, may we meet on Zion's hill! Amen."

It may be right, in this place, briefly to anticipate a question which very naturally suggests itself,—if Mr. Cowley was so exemplary in his religious and Sunday school character, what was he where the best men are often the most tried: in his family, in his warehouse, in the world? The answer is direct,—What he professed to be in the church, *that* he was seen to be in his house: the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and joining devoutly in the worship of God, morning and evening, were duties to which he sedulously attended. The religion which he enjoyed he was anxious to communicate to those most near and dear to him; and nothing gave him so much pleasure, as to witness the budding or the growth of piety in his children. Writing to one of them, he says, "I have always been more solicitous for your soul's salvation, than about any thing that the perishing body needs—though this hath not been forgotten; yet you will not forget that all this may be done by parents without the desired effect, unless you add

your prayers, your personal repentance, and faith in the blessed Saviour. O, my dear child, you know the way; rest not until Jesus Christ be formed in your heart, the hope of glory." As a Christian father and a member of the church of Christ, he was, of course, gratified to find the names of his children enrolled in the same religious community with himself. In allusion to the realization of some of his hopes in this respect, he says, "I hope the Lord will deepen the work [of grace] in all their hearts; and that the whole of my family will become *Methodists*, by which I mean *real Christians*." Indeed, he has frequently been heard to say, in reference to this subject, "My heart's desire, and daily prayer to God is, that my children may be a seed to serve him, when my body is mouldering into dust."

He gratified his daughters, each successively, with a visit to their friends in the metropolis. On these occasions he was, as became a Christian father, extremely anxious for the preservation in them of that virtuous principle which he had so carefully laboured to instil. He was therefore careful, at such times, not merely to give them general exhortations, but particular counsel, and like-

wise frequently to write to them on the mode in which they should conduct themselves amid so many novel temptations. The following fatherly epistle, which one of them found in her trunk on reaching London, may not be unprofitable to other young persons in like circumstances:—

“*Sheffield, June 28, 1822.*”

“DEAR —,— This is an important morning—the farthest in time; beyond this is eternity! You are leaving your father’s house, not knowing what a day, or even an hour, may bring forth. The words of David to his son Solomon, I may, with propriety, address to you, ‘Know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; if thou seek him, he will be found of thee,—(this applies to every situation and circumstance of life, at home or abroad, in sickness or health, in prosperity or adversity,)—but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.’ Do not neglect to seek *first* the kingdom: begin and end every day with prayer; this will be committing your way to the Lord, and he will direct your steps. I would especially advise you not to join any party of pleasure on the Lord’s day; you may with the great-

est modesty and prudence decline this: for 'Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day,' is a command that cannot be dispensed with, without offending God and grieving the Holy Spirit. Remember at all times, 'Thou, God, seest me.' Spend every sabbath day, as much as possible, in religious exercises: read the Bible, and be sure to attend a place of worship twice at least. Let your general conversation be cheerful, but not lightsome nor trifling; I do not mean always talking about religion—but this as much as possible. Join freely any conversation that is edifying; do not be close or reserved, but modestly communicative: in this way the time will pass pleasantly to yourself, and not unprofitably to others. Shun every thing in word, thought, or deed, which you may have to repent of: then you may, with confidence, ask and expect the blessing of God, and have a testimony in your own mind that you please him. My dear —, it is *your father* who thus advises—he, whose desire for your present, but especially for your eternal happiness, never ceases. Read this paper over with serious attention every Sunday morning, and pray that God may make its contents a bless-

ing to you. Should you carefully preserve this letter, and be spared to have the perusal of it *thirty years hence*, you will then feel thankful for such advice as I have given to you this day. That God may bless you with his salvation here, and with glory hereafter, is the heartfelt prayer of your affectionate father,

JOSEPH COWLEY."

This meek and lowly disciple of the Lord Jesus carried into all transactions with his workmen and his customers the religious feeling which actuated him in his family. This peculiarity, as might have been expected, exposed him to the artifices and chicanery of designing men: they sought, and too often succeeded in obtaining from him, unfair and injurious advantages, under smooth and plausible pretences. In this way many, who hated his piety, were well enough inclined to deal with one whose transparent, unsuspecting conduct, laid him open to their duplicity. A keen insight into the characters of tradesmen was by no means a prominent trait in his character; and hence he was too much in the habit of suffering his feelings rather than his judgment to be consulted by the pretensions of those who sought

admission into his books. Such being the case, no one will be surprised to learn that his losses in trade were often very heavy. The writer of these lines recollects, on one occasion, to have seen in the warehouse of his friend a roll of protested notes representing upward of four thousand pounds. Such a defection as this, in a comparatively small concern like Mr. Cowley's, consumed much of the fruits of many years of toil and anxiety. He says in one of his letters to his eldest daughter, "Perhaps not many of my fellow-mortals have laboured more with their hands than myself; but, at this time of life, I am labouring to lay the love of the world out of my heart. Its riches, its honours, its pleasures, have no weight with me; and I pray God that my children may seek first the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness thereof, and then God will, as he hath always done from the beginning, add needful things: and you are so far instructed as to know, that, unless you obey his commandments, you have no claim upon his promises. For myself, I am never happy in any thing not connected with the fear and love of God."

It was Mr. Cowley's constant practice, when he had paid his workmen their wages,

and balanced his books (for he was an exact accountant) on a Saturday night, to review his own conduct and conversation during the week, in order to see how matters stood between his soul and God; and then, having made some suitable record in his journal, to go into his family circle, sup and converse with them, and afterward retire to his closet to prepare for the sabbath. The following will show the nature of the entries referred to:—"Another week of precious time has escaped into eternity, and I am here! I know it is because *He* lives that I live also. In the world, I have tribulations; but, I must say, my mercies far outweigh them all. Tomorrow! O, how my heart exults at the approach of the CHRISTIAN SABBATH! The first day of the week is, to me, the best of all the seven. St. Paul's bell has just struck nine—I haste to prepare. O, may I be in the Spirit! Amen."

He always "entered his closet, and shut to the door," to commune with his God, before he engaged in his daily avocations:—"June 19, 1822. This morning, when retired into my closet, I opened the 23d Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society. The committee, congratulating the sub-

scribers on the return of the month of May, quote the following passage:—‘The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land.’ Never did I read these words with such heavenly emotion before. My heart melted within me; my spirit rose into rapturous delight; tears of real joy involuntarily ran down my cheeks—nor could I restrain them during prayer. I did indeed hold communion with the Father and the Son, through the eternal Spirit. My joy was full, my cup ran over. O, how did the fountain of living water bubble up within my soul! Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! I would not give up the exercises of religion, and the privileges I enjoy as a member of the Methodist Church, even would King George IV. adopt me into his family, or make me lord high admiral of Great Britain.” The latter is a very natural expression from one who had been a sailor, and served his majesty on board of a king’s ship. Such a reference would hardly have been made by a person of any other profession, in his notions of *greatness*.

— He was a careful and delighted observer

of the general appearances of nature, and though he made not the slightest pretension to scientific acumen on this subject, his observations were often shrewd and always pious. A passage or two from his diary will illustrate this assertion:—"How wonderful are thy works, thou great First Cause! This morning, (Jan. 7th,) while waiting to see the sun rise, I read as follows:—"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!" At twenty-five minutes before nine o'clock the first shining edge of the great luminary appeared over the hills above Heeley; in five minutes the whole of the shining orb appeared to rest upon the hill, thus making perfect day. How beautifully did I see those words illustrated,—'The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more to the perfect day.' Even so may my path shine, through the whole year, and to the end of life. Amen!"

August 5th.—"Around Chesterfield, I observed men mowing in one field, and shearing in the next; cocks of hay in one field, and stacks of corn in the field adjoining! I have often admired the goodness of God, in appointing *first* the harvest for the brute creation, so that man might not

be tempted, when his own wants were supplied, to neglect to make provision for the wants of those animals which are dependant upon him. I do not remember ever to have seen both harvests together before."

In all his intercourse with his towns-people, and in his frequent journies to London, Birmingham, and elsewhere, he took his religion with him; and by this means, however unkindly or unjustly he might be treated by the men of the world, or by false friends under the guise of an outward profession, he had an unfailing refuge in the Source of all consolation.

CHAPTER V.

Extract from his journal—Interesting conversation at an inn—Extracts from his journal—Goes to Bakewell for the benefit of his health—Visits the ruins of Haddon Hall—Poetical allusion to this visit—Organizes a Sunday school at Bakewell—Continued prosperity of the school—Extract from his journal.

THE year 1820 was, as most persons will recollect, a period of great commercial depression. Mr. Cowley largely partook of the trials which were then experienced by most

persons in business. The following entry in his journal, under July of the above year, is too striking to be omitted; it may, indeed, probably recall to many others the past endurance of similar agonies:—

“This was one of the most astonishing days of my Christian experience. Early in the morning I had sweet access to the throne of grace, and felt that peace of God which passeth understanding. At a quarter past six o’clock, A. M., I left Birmingham for Wolverhampton. On passing Bilstone, I was astonished at the ferocious appearance of the men in their flannel shirts, assembled together with a great number of dogs, about to bait a bull. I was grieved in my heart, and affected with solemn awe, at the thought of their wickedness. The appearance of every thing here seemed to border on the infernal. The country around black with smoky furnaces,—the town presenting many houses sunk in ruins,—the whole seemed pitchy. The females looked like slaves, and the children like the ‘wild Indian’s brood,’ while the men appeared even more savage than the brutes they led. After breakfast I visited all my friends at Wolverhampton, and was much discouraged, all appearances

being so very dark. For the space of two hours (I was walking in the new church-yard) it seemed the hour and power of darkness in my own soul. I felt as though inevitable ruin must come upon me; I saw, nay, I felt, as though my wife and children were even then in a state of beggary, and myself turned out of the stewardship. I sighed, I groaned, I endeavoured to lift up my soul to behold the Saviour: I looked on the right hand, I looked on the left hand,—I looked before, I looked behind,—but I found no perception of Him whom my soul supremely loved! I read the grave-stones, and was affected with the following:—‘Sacred to the memory of Aurelia Parton, the wife of William Parton, who departed this life, Oct. 20, 1818. Aged 21 years.

‘O, cruel death, that would not be denied,
That broke the bonds of love so lately tied;
I little thought you would have call’d so soon,
I found it night ere yet I thought it noon.’

My heart was indeed affected, but it was carnal affection. I sighed, and even felt a secret wish I had died at that age! This spirit was not likely to bring the desired relief; I wept, I sighed, I mourned in spirit;

I felt sorrowful as unto death ! So hard was my heart, that it seemed willing never to see home again—never to join the domestic circle round my own fireside—the thought of which had so often delighted me in days past : nay, I felt a coward. About four o'clock I set out for Kidderminster : for several miles I could hardly conceal from the passengers my anguish of mind. We had a pleasing prospect of the western mountains of Great Britain, behind which the black mountains of Wales reared their towering heads. While secretly musing on the retreat of the ancient Britons to these mountains, and what probably might be their feelings in those times,—their circumstances much worse than my own ;—under this contrast my mind revived a little from its lethargy, and tears of real penitence silently flowed down my cheeks. I soon found ability to cast my care upon the Lord, feeling a strong inward expression—'Not my will, but thine be done.' On arriving at Kidderminster, I waited upon Mr. C., a local preacher and class leader in the Methodist society. I never saw him before, but he received me as a brother, and took me to his class. When he named my leading the

class, my usual fears arose ; I felt unworthy and unfit, but I humbled myself, and consented. Seven women and six men were present ; my heart enlarged, my fears dispersed before the beams of the Sun of righteousness. The simple, honest people, spoke their experience from the heart ; the fire kindled, and my poor tongue became as the pen of a ready writer : a portion seemed to be given to every one in due season ; every bond seemed to be unloosed—all could say, and all did say—‘It is good to be here.’ To my own surprise, I was not ashamed, but felt power to testify, that ‘the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin.’ When we arrived at my friend’s house, after supper, I joined in family worship : our Lord was with us ; we had another visit from on high, or rather a continuation of the visit. I do not recollect when I retired to rest in such a sweet frame of mind. I fell asleep watering my pillow with tears of real gratitude and joy. I conclude the memorial of this day as I began—it was one of the most astonishing of my Christian experience. Praise the Lord. Amen !”

On one occasion, being in the travellers’ room, at one of the inns in Birmingham, two

medical gentlemen, suspecting him to be a Methodist, while he believed them to be Unitarians, entered into an interesting conversation with Mr. Cowley concerning the knowledge of the pardon of sin. It was settled that the Scriptures should be the rule of judgment, the standard by which all should be tried, and that our friend's personal experience should be allowed to stand in the place of his deficiency of logical knowledge. "It pleased God," he writes, "at the commencement to enlarge my heart, and fill it with that love which beareth all things, and endureth all things. I was permitted to refer to my conversion on the island of Corsica, and my own subsequent conduct for the space of twenty-six years : we continued until nearly midnight. It further pleased God, so to accompany what was advanced by me, his unworthy servant, that both the good gentlemen acknowledged, that what I had declared, being grounded upon facts, was irresistible. In conclusion, I said, if they would point out morality more pure than Jesus Christ taught, as recorded in the gospel, and by which I should become a better husband, a better father, a better master, a better townsman, or a more useful member

of society, I would embrace it. They both very affectionately advised, indeed strenuously exhorted me, to pursue unceasingly that which made me the most happy. They then cordially shook me by the hand, and I do not expect to meet them again below. I returned to rest, blessing and praising God."

On another occasion, two or three years before his death, he happened to be spending the evening at an inn with a number of commercial men, who, like himself, had returned from their day's labours in quest of orders. After supper, and when the party had become tolerably free with one another, some sang songs, and others told stories. Mr. Cowley, however, bore the whole with perfect good humour, until they insisted that he should either sing a song or tell a tale. In this solicitation some of his less scrupulous towns-people, who were present, and knew his character, were the most pressing. At length, after crying, "Shame! shame!" on those, who, had they been at home, would have felt ashamed of such conduct, he said he had no objection to *sing*, and even do something more, if he thought they would be gratified with his performance; they must, he observed, allow him, as they had allowed

the others, to select his own song, and, in order that they might not be taken unawares, he would first repeat a few lines: he then recited,—

“I thirst, thou wounded Lamb of God,
To wash me in thy cleansing blood;
To dwell within thy wounds; then pain
Is sweet, and life or death is gain,” &c.

This was what he would sing, but only on condition that he might be allowed to pray also. Although the company would not consent to this proposal, it had the effect of giving a new turn to the discourse.

The first day of the year 1823 found our venerated friend in deep affliction through bodily indisposition. January 1, he writes, “Yesterday, the last day of the old, and this, the first day of the new year, find me in bed, in a melting nervous fever, brought on by my own indiscretion, (through taking cold,) and this makes it ten times more severe. How solemn and how serious the reflection, that another year of this precarious* life is

* In 1829 he makes this memorandum:—“This word ‘*precarious*’ puzzled me much, when a boy about eight years of age: I used to read it upon a tomb-stone in Edensor church-yard: at sixty years of age, I am well acquainted with it!”

past! As it respects the Lord's mercies, I may say, 'Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!' As it respects myself, 'To me belongeth shame and confusion of face.'" This was a severe illness, and brought him to the brink of the grave. His incessant cry was, "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me." In the July of the year above-mentioned, he went to spend a short time at Bakewell, to try the effects of his native air. On this occasion he visited, with peculiar emotion, the paternal dwelling, and once more knelt in prayer beside his venerable mother. Speaking of his native village, he says, "The duke of Devonshire is making, and intends to make, great alterations. It is said, that he intends to pull down *Old Edensor*, and build a *New Edensor*, nearer Bakewell. If the duke would but build walls about it, with strong gates,—I mean gospel walls of salvation, with gates of praise, which alone are able to keep sin out,—then might it be again named, as I have been told it was formerly, '*Eden*,' until, losing its character of happiness, it become *Eden's o'er*, or *Edensor*. I fear the duke has not the least idea of this kind."

While in Bakewell, the good man attended at church, and the Independent or Methodist chapels, as there happened to be service at each. "In the Independent chapel," says he, "we hear an excellent discourse on the following words,—'For all men have not faith.' In the afternoon I hear the gospel preached in the church, and often say, 'Peace and prosperity be within thy walls!' In the evening we hear good old 'Jacky Ward,' a striking sample of the first race of Methodist preachers, both in his appearance, manner of preaching, and in his doctrines: one who can give you chapter and verse for every one of his Scriptural quotations." "July 8th. This day I attain to my fifty-fifth year. I covenanted this morning with my God, that my restored health and lengthened life should henceforth be devoted to his service and glory. O, my Lord, grant that this may be an everlasting covenant, never to be broken."

Will the indulgent reader allow the individual who is transcribing these passages from the hand-writing of his valued friend, to add the following, including, as it does, his own name, and to append thereunto a few lines, which might by some persons be

deemed a little extraneous to the scope of this narrative? Continuing the birth-day entry above noticed, Mr. Cowley remarks, "This morning, J. Holland, C. Congreve, and my eldest daughter, paid us a visit from Sheffield. After breakfast I went with them to view the mouldering remains of ancient Haddon Hall, once the baronial mansion of the flourishing family of the Vernons, of which Sir George Vernon, who died in the seventh year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, 'was so distinguished for his magnificent port and hospitality, that he acquired the name of THE KING OF THE PEAK.' At the head of the great stairs is the grand gallery, 110 feet long, and 117 feet wide: the floor is of oak planks, cut, as tradition says, out of a single tree, which grew in the park, and the five or six circular steps at the entrance were cut out of its roots. If this be true, the tree must have been of an enormous size. In the pleasure ground there are several large yew trees, which, according to the statement of old Dorothy Hage, (who has carried the keys of the fabric forty-seven years,) have been growing there above 300 years! Our minds were exercised with ideas of what might have transpired here in the

days of chivalry," &c., &c. As a memento of that visit, the writer of the present sketch composed a short poem, entitled, "Haddon Hall," which contains the following allusion to the interesting invalid as he then appeared:—

“—— My elder friend
 Was here in quest of health; this mountain air
 Was his first breath,—at his nativity
 He did inhale, and now again he sought
 Its bracing and exhilarating influence
 An invalid—and sought it not in vain.
 These were the scenes that charm'd his boyish years;
 This rich romantic page of nature's book
 Became his primer of the works of God:
 Here he first learn'd to read the Deity.
 He, too, had gazed on ocean's ample volume,
 And, above all, had read the word of life;
 But now, in the maturity of years,
 His feelings by religion sanctified,
 Grace in his heart, and gratitude and praise
 Upon his lips, he gazed on this fair scene,
 As one who sojourns through a lovely vale
 To one still lovelier; he from earth to heaven
 Look'd ceaseless.”

Wherever he happened to be sojourning, though for never so short a time, he sought to do something in the cause of his divine Master. While at Bakewell, therefore, he laboured assiduously and successfully to or-

ganize a Sunday school in that town, as he had likewise done at Baslow four years before; both of which continue to flourish. Indeed, the very latest tracings of his pen which I have seen, relative to those subjects nearest his heart, are the following words:—
“Saturday morning, June 6th. J. R. called upon me, and, in a very simple manner, said he was come to see Mr. Cowley, to inform him of the prosperity of the Methodist Sunday school at Bakewell, which he said I established there in 1823. He informed me too, that J. Y., whom I then advised to become a teacher, did so, and is now an acceptable local preacher. Praise the Lord.”

It was, indeed, the chief aim of this blessed man, in the church, or in the world, to live with reference to the final account, so as not to bring a reproach upon the cause of religion. The ensuing passage will show how justly he appreciated those Christian duties, for the performance of which the providence of God had made him responsible:—“This morning, in reading over a short sermon for the day, from the text—‘Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart’—I was powerfully induced to look over the relative

situations which I sustained in the world, in every one of which I ought to consider myself as the STANDARD-BEARER of *the cross of Christ*. As a son, brother, husband, father, master; a subject of the king of Great Britain, a Methodist, a class-leader, superintendent of a Sunday school, a secretary to the Sheffield Sunday School Union, treasurer to a Sunday school library, a townsman of Sheffield, an Englishman! And, considering that a standard-bearer in an army must not relinquish his colours but with his life, I was astonished at what crossed my mind. Quick as thought I ran over these offices, and felt, powerfully felt, how poorly I had done my duty. I felt I had frequently deserted the standard of Jesus, and, coward-like, had laid down *my* colours in every situation. My mind was much affected at prayer, especially on viewing myself as a steward of the Lord in my worldly affairs. I prayed, as in an agony, that the Lord would apply his pardoning mercy to my heart, and give me the true Christian spirit of every office; that henceforward I may prove myself a workman not needing to be ashamed. I have endeavoured to humble myself through the whole of the day, and now feel a very

great hungering and thirsting after holiness. I ardently pant for 'a heart in every thought renewed, and full of love divine;' for this entire sanctification, this perfect love which casteth out all fear that hath torment."

CHAPTER VI.

Declining health of his youngest daughter—Extract from his journal—Sunday school teachers' social meetings—Beneficial tendency of Sunday schools—Mr. Cowley holds a covenant meeting of the Sunday scholars—Is afflicted with mental derangement—His triumphant death—Funeral—Inscription on his tomb.

IN the year 1828 the bitterness which worldly trials had infused into Mr. Cowley's cup of life, was still more painfully mingled by the evident decay, through consumption, of his youngest daughter. The pangs which his sensitive mind endured while the affliction of this beloved child continued are frequently adverted to in his journal:—"Dec. 7th. After another week of sore affliction with my dear child, during which we have lost all hope of her recovery, my mind is sorely afflicted, and I am praying hard that the Lord

would indulge me in sparing her so long, that I may hear her tell of victory over death, through the blood of the Lamb. This blessed sabbath morn I think I should be willing to part, and give her up were this the case."

On the last day of the same year, he wrote as follows :—"This has been one of the most eventful years of my life : I have had difficulties, trials, losses, perplexities, disappointments, personal affliction, family affliction ; a daughter nine months in severe pain and great weakness, often, to all human appearance, at the point of death, and yet alive. But during this course of time I have enjoyed many happy Christian privileges ; these mingled with my bitter cup, have, at times, rendered my afflictions beneficial to myself, and to others to whom I have named them. I have enjoyed many pleasant hours in Christian exercises ; in private prayer I have received much ; at my family altar, in class meetings, prayer meetings, covenant meetings, love feasts, Sunday school exercises, quarterly meetings, half yearly lectures, and annual meeting of the Sunday School Union ; anniversaries of the Bible Society, Missionary Societies, Seamen's Friend Society, &c. I must not forget to mention the blessed sa-

crament of the Lord's supper : this is always a solemn feast."

There was another "feast" which he attended on the evening of the same 31st of December, and concerning which he has left a beautiful memorial,—I mean one of those *feasts of love*, which have sprung out of the affection which subsists among the teachers, and are by them designated "social meetings." They are generally held at Christmas, and form a chain of sweet influence between the domestic and religious characters of those who attend them, various links of which, bearing the names of all the Christian denominations, are interchangeably recognised at the school festivals of each. On these occasions Mr. Cowley was frequently an invited, and, it need not be added, a welcome guest. "This blessed evening," he writes, Dec. 31, "I have had the sacred pleasure of attending the social meeting of the Attercliffe Sunday school teachers and friends [of Zion chapel.] I have attended with Christian joy and delight; God is with them: and when I heard their testimony, I could say, and did say, (as was said of Jesus when upon earth,) 'No man can do the things which thou doest, except God be with him,' 'for,' said I, 'no man

among you could of himself do such things as you declare ; all of you together could not by human efforts convert one soul ; yet souls have been converted, children have died happy, which proves that God is manifestly among you.' I told them I was glad to find that the name of Calvinist, Baptist, Independent, Churchman, and Methodist, was no obstacle in the way : that I found where the same means were used, where Christian instruction was given, and Christian discipline attended to, the same effects were produced,—teachers and children were converted to God, superintendents and others were encouraged in the blessed work. While many brethren had been speaking of these things, our hearts had burned within us ; our faith had been increased ; our zeal in the good cause inflamed ; our spirits animated, and our love to God and one another more thoroughly perfected. I said, I thought enough had been done, through their instrumentality, to stimulate them to labour on for three-score years and ten, should they be spared so long. It was indeed a blessed Christian meeting to myself and my brother secretary, Mr. R. Leader : to both they showed the greatest kindness and respect, and

even put honour upon us, by the manner in which they introduced us to such a respectable company, and listened to what we had to say. I bless my God, that at none of these meetings do we hear any thing of sect or party, but CHRIST is all in all: to him, with the FATHER and HOLY SPIRIT, be all the glory. Amen!"

In reference to the absurd assertion, that Sunday schools have rather increased than diminished bad manners and idleness among servants, the pious superintendent enters the following sensible remarks in his diary, under the date of June 16, 1822:—"I am again much blessed at the opening of the girls' school, Red Hill. My mind has been much impressed with the necessity of speaking to all the girls about the report, that Sunday scholars in servitude are idle, impertinent, and dishonest, circulated by some persons in the face of day; indeed, they assert, that Sunday school instruction does an injury to society. I should, indeed, wonder, if out of so vast a number, *some*, nay, *many*, did not act improperly. I really wonder there are not more instances: this, however, is not owing to their education, but to their either

neglecting or abusing it. By the permission of the religious instructors, I spoke to ten classes of the eldest girls before their teachers, mentioning the report current in the world, and the blame thereby cast upon Sunday school conductors. In making this statement, I was powerfully affected, even to tears. I appealed to their own hearts, whether what we taught led them to disobey their parents, to neglect the lawful commands of their masters or mistresses; to lie, swear, steal, or break the sabbath? I affirmed, that we inculcated subordination, taught them that they should love God with all their heart, and that he could not approve of them, unless they obeyed all his commandments. That he required of us all to 'do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.' That both by precept and example the gospel law had been enforced,—'Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye also even unto them.' The Lord the Spirit opened my mouth, and though the exercises were arduous, and very fatiguing to the flesh, I hope and trust they will be owned and blessed of God, and overruled to his own glory and the good of the rising generation,

and all connected with them. I do bless God for my privileges as a Christian Sunday school teacher."

On the first sabbath afternoon of the last year of his life, he engaged in a solemn religious dedication with the children. This service, which is annually attended to in the church of which he was a member, he had regularly observed with the scholars for ten years. Its nature will be best explained by one of his own entries on the subject:—"We held a COVENANT MEETING with the Sunday scholars in the upper room of the school; the girls were placed in one part of the room, and the boys in another; I believe upward of *one thousand* children were present, and about sixty teachers and superintendents; my heart melted within me at the blessed sight! and I inly exclaimed, 'What hath God wrought!' 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in my eyes.' I explained to them the nature of the covenant, in as simple a manner as I could: telling them that it was necessary that the three following principles should be fixed in their minds, namely, 'That things eternal were infinitely more important than things temporal; that

the things that are not seen as certainly exist as the things that are seen; and that upon their choice, perhaps their *present* choice, of these depended their everlasting welfare or misery.' Having desired them to sit down, I told them the covenant which I wished them to make was one which they might agree to, with the greatest propriety; it was simply that they would endeavour, the Lord being their helper, to serve him better (should he spare them) another year, than they had done the last: and that those who resolved, through divine assistance, to do so, would signify such resolution by standing up. How my heart burned within me, and tears of gratitude to God flowed down my cheeks, when I beheld such an infant host at once rise up with cheerful countenances! I then told them who were spectators of this transaction, namely, the great God who made them; the Lord Jesus, who died to redeem them; holy angels, and us, their teachers, were all looking upon them with approbation. We sung the covenant hymn, and spent the afternoon in solemn prayer." The hymn to which he alludes will be found in Wesley's Hymn-book, page 495: it commences thus—

“Come, let us use the grace divine,
And all with one accord,
In a perpetual *covenant* join
Ourselves to CHRIST the Lord.”

The year 1829, as just intimated, found the subject of this memoir labouring with his accustomed assiduity to discharge the duties arising out of the various relations above enumerated, and with no apparent likelihood of a speedy cessation therefrom. But infinite wisdom had otherwise ordained,—his days were numbered,—the decree, “This year thou shalt die!” had gone forth. He attended our Sunday School Union anniversary on Whit-Monday with his wonted cheerfulness, leaning on the arm of the writer of this paragraph during the procession: he was likewise present at the quarterly meeting held in July, on which occasion he prayed with his usual fervency. On the 21st of June he attended, as usual, at Red Hill school, addressed the girls with great earnestness, and remarked, that he did not know what the Lord was going to do with him, but that he never had so sweet experience of the salvation of the gospel.

On the following sabbath the writer dined with his friend, who appeared in almost

every respect as usual ; that is, much shrunk, rather feverish, and considerably distressed about his youngest daughter, whose dissolution was then daily expected. On calling at his friend's warehouse, three days afterward, and inquiring for the master, the writer was astounded by the laconic reply,—“Have not you heard, sir, that Mr. Cowley is quite deranged ?” Presently, on recovering from the consternation into which my mind had been thrown by this melancholy communication, I hastened to the house of my beloved friend, and soon, alas ! had too sure a confirmation of the painful fact.

Over the interval between this period of Mr. Cowley's life, and until within a few of his last days on earth, the tenderness of Christian charity may surely be permitted to draw a veil, as the Lord, in the mystery of his inscrutable providence, and, no doubt, for reasons as merciful as inexplicable, drew a veil over the spirit of his faithful servant. To those who might expect from the pen that traces this faint sketch of a “saint indeed,” a single additional sentiment on this painful and delicate point, it may be enough to state, that, in the decided opinion of the present writer, the proximate cause of this afflictive

aberration is not to be sought for in any single circumstance whatsoever, but in the complication of several trials acting at once upon a temperament naturally intense and susceptible.

- ‘ God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform ;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.
- “ Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.
- “ Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.
- “ Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace ;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.
- “ His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour :
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.
- “ Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain ;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.”

On the 4th of December he was removed from the retirement in which he had been placed, in order to secure the best professional attention, to his own house at Sheffield; the weakness of his body having evidently, and almost entirely, reduced the hallucinations of his mind. Supported in a chaise, between his wife and the medical attendant, he bore with difficulty the fatigue of an inconsiderable journey: he was extremely glad to find himself once more at home, that home which had long been a house of affliction, and from which *death*, during his brief absence, had taken away his youthful daughter. He often alluded to this family bereavement, with much emotion; but ever presently turned to expressions of joy and satisfaction in the assurance that his body would soon be laid beside that of his beloved child in his favourite church-yard, while their spirits would be together in their Father's house above!

On the morning of the day on which he died, his family were much surprised and delighted to hear him break out, and sing, at the full pitch of his now very feeble voice:—

“Glory, honour, praise, and power!
 Be unto the Lamb for ever;
 Jesus Christ is our Redeemer,
 Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
 Praise the Lord!”

And turning toward his wife, he emphatically repeated the third line, “Jesus Christ is *our* Redeemer;” adding, “not *mine* only, but *ours*,—yours and mine, love.” He then shouted, “Victory! victory! through the blood of the Lamb!”

In a short time he called upon his two daughters, who were standing near him, to join him in singing a favourite hymn, (Dr. Watts’s,) beginning,—

“There is a land of pure delight,” &c.

He joined with great emphasis in the words—

“Sweet fields, beyond the swelling flood,
 Stand dress’d in living green;
 So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
 While Jordan roll’d between,” &c.

After singing the following verse—

“There shall I bathe my weary soul
 In seas of heavenly rest,
 And not a wave of trouble roll
 Across my peaceful breast!”

“No, my children,” added he, “never will another wave of sorrow roll across your father’s breast !” They then sung with him,—

“Take my poor heart, and let it be
For ever closed to all but Thee ;
Seal thou my breast, and let me wear
That pledge of love for ever there.”

He then broke out,—

“I’ll praise my Maker while I’ve breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers :
My days of praise shall ne’er be past,
While life, or thought, or being last,
Or immortality endures.”

Then turning to his daughters, he exclaimed,
“Your father has *indeed* a loud song of
praise to sing—*his* song of mercy will ne’er
be done—it will last through eternity ! now
let us sing,—

‘Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,’ ” &c.

Having finished the doxology, after a pause,
he would sing,—

“O what shall I do, my Saviour to praise ?
So faithful and true, so plenteous in grace ;
So strong to deliver, so good to redeem,
The weakest believer that hangs upon him !”

He then remarked, "I shall soon be with my dear Sarah in heaven: but then there is the *last conflict*, which still is the penalty of man's transgression; the last enemy to be destroyed is death! Christ hath put *all things* under his feet but death."

A short time before he breathed his last, his wife inquired whether Christ were precious? "Yes, O yes!" he replied; and presently exclaimed, "Happy! happy! happy!" In a few minutes afterward, calmly and sweetly, he fell asleep in the arms of that Jesus whom his soul supremely loved, on Sunday evening, December the 6th, 1829, in the sixty-second year of his age.

On the Friday morning following, being the day of Mr. Cowley's interment, several respectable individuals, who had known his holy and useful life and conversation, his brother secretaries of the Sunday School Union, many members of his own religious denomination, most of the superintendents, and a long train of children from the Red Hill Sunday school, assembled at his residence, to pay the last tribute of their personal respect to the memory of him whom they had respectively known as a faithful labourer in the vineyard of their common Lord and

Master. After singing a hymn over the coffin, and accompanying the hearse about a mile out of town, they sung a few more verses, and then returned to Sheffield. The writer of this memoir had the mournful satisfaction of accompanying the family of the deceased to the place of interment, and with them of witnessing the burial of the body of the late beloved husband, father, brother, friend, and sincere Christian, in the churchyard of his native village of Edensor, near Chatsworth.

A fortnight afterward, at the request of the Sheffield Sunday School Union, the Rev. George Cubitt delivered an affectionate and interesting discourse in reference to the character and usefulness of the late secretary of that institution, in Queen-street Chapel. The preacher, after bearing his own personal testimony to the excellence of Mr. Cowley's character, read, rather as the Scriptural motto of his theme, than as a formal text, the apostle's well-known assertion relative to Abel,—“He being dead, yet speaketh.”

The following inscription from his tombstone may appropriately conclude this sketch:—

JOSEPH COWLEY,

(Born at EDENSOR, July 8, 1768,)

Died Dec. 6, 1829, in the 62d year of his age.

In all the relations of life

He exemplified the character of
a sincere Christian.

He was senior secretary of the
Sunday School Union, in Sheffield ;

Where, for thirty years, he laboured as a
Sunday school teacher,

With unwearied zeal, constancy, and success.

Those who knew and loved him best

Inscribe this tribute to his memory.

THE END.



OCT 30 1934

